



The Lal Badam Tree

Written by
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Illustrated by
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Original Story in Urdu **‘Laal Baadaam’** by Rumana Husain
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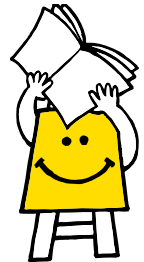
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PRATHAM BOOKS

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Pragya Gopinath

Rashida and Anwar's small house was located in Karachi's old mohalla, Soldier Bazaar. There was a big lal badam tree in their garden. The bright red fruits peeping out from amongst the deep green leaves of the tree looked quite lovely. Parrots and many other birds would keep flying in and out of the tree. When they ate the fruits, some of them would fall from their beaks to the ground.

Ammi was very annoyed with the parrots. She didn't like their 'taaai taaai' calls or the lal badams they scattered all over the garden. But the children liked the bright green birds and all that they did.

Rashida and Anwar often told their Ammi that she should thank the parrots instead of cursing them. The children would go behind Ammi's back to pick up the fruits which fell in the garden. Ammi had forbidden them from eating the kernels all the time.

She had also told them not to eat unwashed kernels. Ammi said the rotted, worm-infested ones were certainly not to be put into their mouths.

"There are big worms growing in your stomachs! Very big, very long worms!" She would stretch her arms far apart to show the size of the creatures. The children would get frightened and stop eating lal badams for a few days.

Ammi had completely forbidden them from removing the kernel inside the fruit. Pray, why had she done this?

She had done this because when the children could not break the hard seed inside the fruit with their teeth, they would put it between the wooden door and the frame and slam the door shut. This helped to break the seed open and then they would merrily remove the kernel and eat it.

"These nuts! The parrots have driven me crazy and you two have destroyed all the doors!" Ammi would shout in anger. Rashida and Anwar would look at each other when they were scolded this way. They had explained to their Ammi several times that since the doors were already spoilt, there was no need for her to get angry. Sometimes, children are unable to understand what adults really want.

One day Rashida whispered to Anwar, "Nana Nani's house doesn't have a lal badam tree. That's why Ammi doesn't know the fun of eating the kernels."

"Yes, you are right!" Anwar said. "Next time, after breaking the seed we will give it to Ammi first, okay?" "Okay!" Rashida nodded vigorously.

They also kept the kernels in a dish. Then they waited for Ammi to come home so they could present the kernels to her. When Ammi returned, Abba woke up as well.

"Ammi, Abba, today there is something special for you to eat," Anwar told his parents. "Really?" Abba looked at him with interest. Rashida ran and brought the dish full of nutty kernels.

She placed it in front of Ammi and said, "Ammi, Nana Nani's house doesn't have a lal badam tree, so you would not have eaten the kernels. We thought that today we would feed you lots of them."

"Yes, please eat. Abba, you eat too. See how delicious they are," said Anwar. When Anwar spoke like a grown up cajoling a child, Ammi forgot all her anger and began to laugh loudly. Abba started laughing as well. Rashida and Anwar started giggling upon seeing their parents laugh out loud. The parrots called out 'taaai taaai' as if they were joining in. And everyone enjoyed eating the lal badams.

The lal badams of Karachi

Karachi is Pakistan's biggest city, located near the sea in the province of Sindh. It started out as a small settlement of fisher-folk.

Karachi is known for its delicious Biryani, Qorma, Nargisi Koftay, Palak Paneer, Nihari Haleem and Karachi Halwa! Karachi Halwa is quite rubbery and available in various colours.

Walking in Karachi's bazaars, one can hear conversations in Urdu, Pushto, Gujarati, Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, Balochi, Kutchi, Balti, Persian, Hindko, and many more languages. On Karachi's roads one can see beautifully painted and decorated trucks. Donkey-carts, horse-carriages and camel-carts can also be seen in the old parts of the city. Karachi has many lal badam trees, just like many places in India. They provide shelter to many kinds of birds and other creatures including honeybees.

Names can be very confusing, don't you think? 'Lal Badam', in Hindi and Urdu means 'red nut'. But the lal badam is not really a nut. It is just another fruit, whose seed tastes like a nut. And since the flesh around this seed is red, people call it lal badam!

Lal badam is also called country nut, Bengal nut, false kamani, Indian nut, Malabar nut, sea nut and tropical nut. Lal badams are high in protein and are tasty to eat. That is why children like Anwar and Rashida like them!

Have you eaten the famous Badami mango? Grown in Pakistan and India, this is not a badam but a mango. It is shaped like a nut and that is why it is called Badami mango.



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Rumana Husain has written and illustrated over 60 children's books for several publishers. Trained as a graphic designer, she has had an evolving career: from teaching art to making fabric-toys, as an innovative school head and author of two well known coffee-table books about her city, Karachi.



Ruchi Mhasane has studied children's book illustration from the Cambridge School of Art. She likes working with watercolour and pencil, and loves capturing subtle movements and gestures on paper, especially of little children. Fond of music and travelling, she hopes to work with different and meaningful stories not often told in mainstream children's books.

Rashida and Anwar could not understand why their mother forbade them from eating the lal badams that they loved! Didn't she realize how much fun it was to eat them straight from the tree? Feast on this sweet story from Pakistan written originally in Urdu.

Learning to read – level by level. This is a Level 3 book.

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